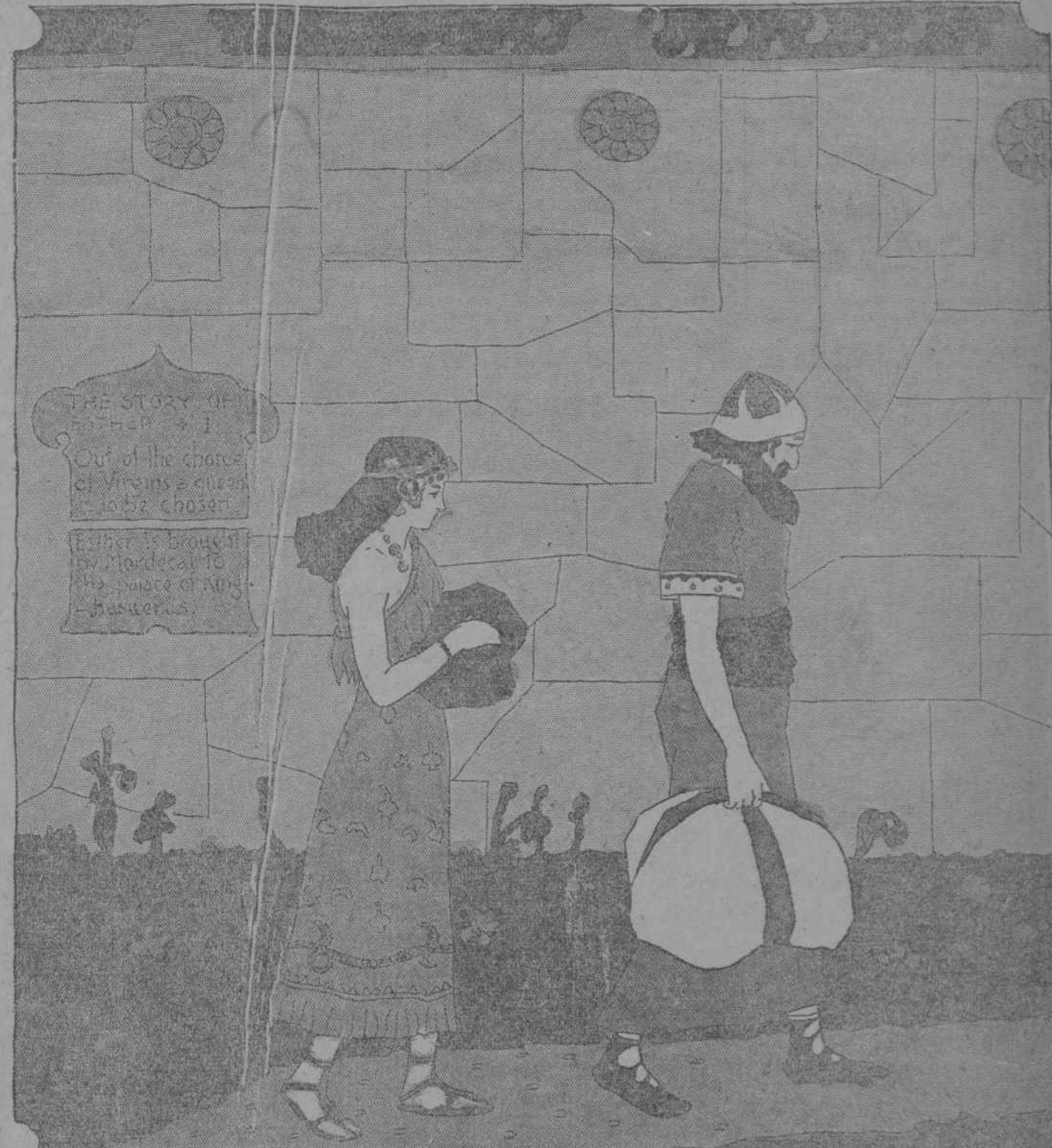
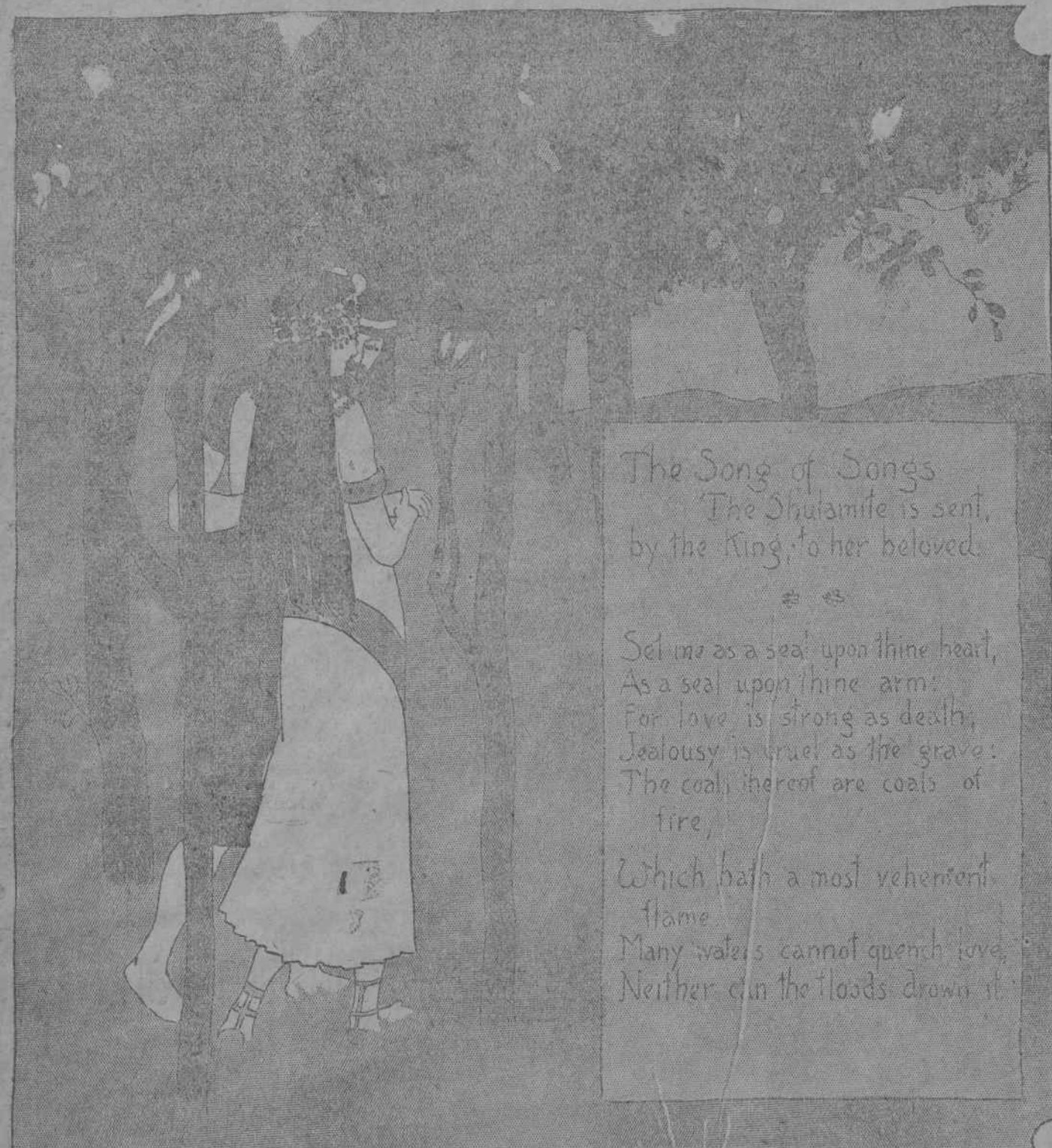


A MODERN ILLUSTRATOR'S IDEA OF THE WAY THE BIBLE SHOULD BE PICTURED.



Among the very recent artists who have startled the world by the originality or eccentricity of their work, none is more noteworthy than Gilbert James, an Englishman, who has made a series of illustrations of Biblical stories. His work has great qualities. He has succeeded in reproducing ancient Palestine in a way that appeals to the imagination of many people. The splendor of King Solomon's court, the luxurious ease of his life, and the glorious climate are all brought out.

Two subjects which Mr. James has taken for illustration are "The Song of Solomon" and "The Book of Esther." The first of these is generally regarded as the most poetical work in the Scriptures. It is said to be the only remaining one of the 1,005 songs composed by Solomon. In the Hebrew idiom it is called "The Song of Songs," meaning that it is the best of them all.

The orthodox view used to be that it was an ode composed by Solomon on his marriage with the daughter of Pharaoh or some native of Palestine of noble extraction, but inferior to her husband. Its language is held to be figurative of the union between Christ and the church. Mr. James has made his drawings on the assumption that "The Song of Solomon" is a simple love story. This is the theory of some modern students. According to them, the Shulamite maiden, who is one of the persons in the poem, was a young country girl who had taken his fancy and whom he caused to be brought to him. He made love to her, but she was faithful to her betrothed lover, probably a country shepherd. All the King's pleadings and presents had no effect on her and she only pleaded to be sent back to her lover again. Finally the King's heart was touched and he sent her home.

Mr. James's illustrations show this last scene, and is entitled "The Shulamite Is Sent by the King to Her Beloved."

"The Book of Esther" is a story of great historical interest. It relates how Vashti, the Queen of Ahasuerus, refused to display herself before his courtiers. Then he sought for a maiden that would please him and Esther, the daughter of Mordecai, the Jew, found favor in his sight. She became his queen and obtained immense power, destroying all her enemies and enriching her family. Ahasuerus is believed to have been Artaxerxes, the King of Persia. Esther belongs to those Jews who have voluntarily remained in Babylon. The narrative shows their moral doctrine, because they are willing to conceal their religion for the sake of personal advantage among foreigners.

